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In the Heart of Virginia's Dark Tobacco Belt
Appomattox, Virginia

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CHRISTMAS SHOPPING AT HOME

Most local merchants interviewed, have stated that Christmas volume of trade has been unusually good this year. It's our belief that this is true in most localities, and the holiday season of 1956 will be listed in the records at a peak level. We have been impressed by the number of shoppers who "traded at home" this year. From all reports, the jam of traffic has been tremendous in the big cities, and many shoppers have been unable to fight their way through the streets, much less get to the sales counters. We heard one person remark: "Even taxi cabs could get through in downtown Washington." We have heard of others who have had to give up finding a parking place. And the appeal has been tremendous, to save valuable time by shopping at home. On top of that is the fact that local stores have gone all out this year to offer quality and quantity of holiday items. Thus the necessity of going to the city has been less from that angle, too. All in all, businessmen have every reason to be optimistic over the home-town business situation.

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THE CHRISTMAS PHILOSOPHY

Christmastime each year is a time for every citizen to do some serious thinking. We observe Christmas on December 25th, although the anniversary of the birth of Jesus is only an approximate date since the exact date is actually not known.

For many years, January 6th was observed by the Christians in Palestine as the date of both the birth and the baptism of Jesus, but that was many centuries ago and the date has been changed since that time. Egyptian theologians celebrated May 20th as the date, while others had set the date as April 19th or 20th.

In any event, Christmastime is the time to remember the teaching and philosophy of Jesus. So many of us have over-commercialized Christmas and made it a time of blood, sweat and tears — in the Christmas rush — that we fail to enjoy the contentment, peace and reverence that the holiday period should provide.

Probably most of our Christmas customs came from Germany, although about as many came from England. The Christmas tree is of German origin, as in the belief in Santa Claus — two of our most cherished traditions today in the United States. The use of mistletoe stems from England, as does the custom of sending Christmas cards — which was introduced in the United States by Marcus Ward and Company, of London, in the 1870's.

The use of fireworks at Christmas time, which is common throughout the South, comes to us from Italy, France and Spain — the Latin countries. Its origin in the South seems to have stemmed from French settlers in Louisiana who introduced the custom in the United States.

In this connection, it is interesting to note that Christmas was observed in the South much earlier than it was in the North — and actually, at one time during the Puritan ascendancy in England, the observance of Christmas was forbidden. This influence — extending into New England especially — worked against the observance of Christmas in the early years of our country. In fact, the Christmas tree was not used in Massachusetts until about 1860, when John C. Buschmann, a German, put up a tree in Westfield, and invited people to see it.

Now, happily, Christmas is celebrated alike everywhere in the U. S. and is our major religious observance of the year. It is the grandest and most exotic holiday for our young people.

The spirit of Christmas is one which could solve the world's problems, if only the peoples of the world would live and think in the Christmas tradition throughout the year. We hope many Americans will set this ideal as their goal for this Christmas.

* * * * * * * * *

MEN AND HATS

An article in a national weekly newspaper recently pointed out that Danbury, Connecticut, the hat city of the United States, was concerned about hat-check girls and the fact that men are not wearing hats like they used to.

Obviously, men have drifted away from the habit of wearing hats, since World War I because the population has increased enormously while the production of hats has dropped. One of the reasons for this, although perhaps not the main reason, is the existence of hat-check girls, which some people in Danbury, Connecticut, think harmful to the hat industry.

To a certain extent, we think this is true, since many people feel that putting a hat on a rack, or a shelf, is not a task which deserves financial remuneration. So, many men just do not wear hats and avoid the constant requirement of tipping when they enter a restaurant, a club or some other establishment.

No doubt one of the reasons for the decline in the wearing of hats by men is the belief, rightly or wrongly, that wearing a band around the head may cause baldness. The hat industry attempted to counter this belief by pointing out that bare-headedness was certainly an invitation to poor health. They quoted Army reports showing that the wearing of a hat helps keep the feet warm. Presumably, it was taken for granted that it kept the head warm, also.

But, in recent years, the wearing of hats by men continued to decline. Now, the hat-makers say that the style trend is back to hats, including caps — which seem to be making a comeback.

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BUSINESS LEADERS OPTIMISTIC

Recent polls of important business executives, and surveys of corporation executives, indicate most business men expect better times in 1957. In fact, the general opinion — contrary to what we have suspected— is that next year's business will pick up considerably.

The average opinion among the optimists is that business will be up by at least ten per cent and that the gross national product will be up to something like $430,000,000,000.

We hope that the optimists are correct, and we also hope that the American farmer will share in the prosperity.

Local F. H. A. Christmas Project

Frances Carson is shown working on the Christmas gifts for children in the orphanage.

The local F. H. A. girls are playing Santa Claus to two children in the Methodist Orphanage in Richmond.

Wednesday, December 12, Miss Laura Mottley, Linda Hunter, Becky Reynolds, Linda Sarver, and Frances Carson went to Richmond to take the gifts. It was so hard for the group to leave the children, after seeing them for the first time. They were so affectionate and had such wonderful personalities. The local group wanted to bring them back, and Miss Mottley became so attached she's going back during the holidays.

The group had lunch at Miller and Rhoads Tea Room, where Santa Claus and the Snow Queen were also dining.

Friday, the F. H. A. had its regular monthly meeting, to which the student body was invited. There was a musical program, with group singing of Christmas carols, and a pantomine by Kitty Wood. Sandra Pillow read some poems with a Christmas theme.

DUCKS SHUN VA.'S WARM WEATHER

Duck shooting in Virginia so far this season has been rather disappointing. The weather in the northern part of the country hasn't been cold enough to drive them their southern wintering grounds, according to Webb Midyette, Chief of the Law Enforcement Division of the Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries.

However, Midyette stated, the largest goose population in years is wintering in Virginia and has given wildfowlers excellent sport.

Santa Claus, in person, will be in Appomattox this Saturday at 2:00 P. M. Bring the children out to see him.

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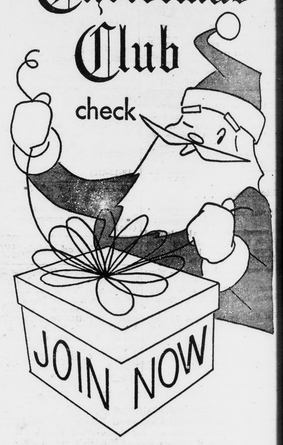

Spread more Christmas cheer next year. Have enough extra money to enjoy a wonderful winter holiday, too. You can do both, simply by saving a convenient amount regularly the Christmas Club way. It's easy and it's fun. Join now. We'll welcome you as a member.

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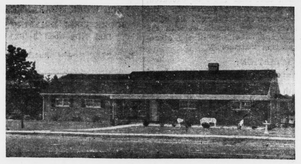

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Garden Talk

By Appomattox Garden Club

Today let us wish for all of our readers a very, very Merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year, if we have been of any service to you, through this column or through the Garden Club work, we are gratified. And if we can serve in some way in the future, we shall be happy.

As you doubtless know, there are no satisfactions equal to those of the successful gardener who has begun with a hope, a will to work, a hoe and some brown bulbs, seeds, and small shapeless shrubs, and has achieved a miracle — a garden full of perfume and color.

There are some lines by Mildred A. Cowen that recommend gardening as the panacea for unhappiness:

"No matter what the sorrows
The troubles or the care,
I can dig out in my garden
And leave them buried there."

So happy gardening to you during 1957.

666
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CHRISTMAS PAGEANT AT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

A Christmas Pageant will be presented Thursday night, December 20, 1956, following the business session of the Appomattox Elementary School P.-T. A., which meets at 7:30 P. M. in the auditorium.

The rooms will be open for visitation before and after the program.

Those taking part in the program are:

Mary: Maggie Ferguson
Joseph: James Whitehead
Angels: Betty Watson, Gabriel; Carolyn Nash, Linda Nash, Brenda Nash, Judith Cocke, Sue Gilbert, Patricia Jones.
Shepherds: David Repass, Donald Tomlin, Marvin House.
Wise Men: Carlton Collins, Calvin Ferguson, Willard Johnson.
Candlebearers: Carolyn Coleman, Linda Slagle, Jane Wilson, Joyce Edmonds, Gloria Jean Doss, Barbara Gaines, Ann Godsey, Kathryn Taylor.

CHANGES IN SOCIAL SECURITY

During 1955 and 1956, if you employed farm labor, you were required to keep records and pay social security taxes on each individual employee to whom you paid $100 or more in cash wages in a year. However, the Social Security Act was amended in 1956, and beginning January 1, 1957, you will be required to pay social security taxes if you (1) pay an employee $150 or more in cash wages during a year for agricultural labor, or (2) if the employee performs agricultural labor for you on 20 days or more during a calendar year for cash pay figured on a time basis (not on a piece-work basis).

Social Security Rates Will Increase

A self-employed farmer at present time is paying 3 per cent of net earnings in the form of social security taxes. This tax will increase at the following rates under present provisions in the tax law: 1957-59—3 3-8 per cent; 1960-64—4 1-8 per cent; 1965-69 — 4 7-8 per cent; 1970-74—5 5-8 per cent; 1975 and after, 6 3-8 per cent.

Labor Requirements

New techniques, new machinery design, overall mechanization of many jobs on the farm, have changed labor requirements for many crops. Some corps because of their ultimate use and nature, give a greater net return per acre, yet per hour their return is poor.

For example, here are some changes that have taken place.

Corn— to produce 100 bushels, required 135 man-hours in 1910-1914 and only 34 hours in 1950-1953. This represents a reduction of 74.9 per cent in labor requirements. If corn is worth $1.10 a bushel, you can expect a net return of $3.82 for each hour employed in corn production. Wheat required 106 man-hours in 1910-14 to produce 100 bushels and in 1950-53, 26 hours, a 75.5 per cent reduction in labor requirements. If wheat is worth $2.00 per bushel, the farmer receives a return of $7.69 for each hour of labor.

To produce a ton of hay required 10.2 hours in 1910-14 and 4.6 in 1950-53, a reduction of 54.4 per cent. If hay is worth $40.00 per ton, the producers receive a return of $8.69 per hour.

Tobacco has not changed as radically as other crops. In 1910-14, it required 44 hours to produce 100 pounds and 37 hours in 1950-53, a change of 15.9 per cent. If tobacco is worth $60.00 per 100 pounds, the producer receives a return of $1.62 per hour.

Garden Club Christmas Party

The Garden Club Christmas Party was held in the cafeteria of the Eelmentary School Monday at 8:00 P. M. The members and their guests were entertained by the orchestra of Appomattox High School, conducted by Mrs. Joyce Currocke.

Christmas carols and other Christmas music was on the program.

After the numbers by the orchestra, the Garden Club was priviledged to hear a book review by Miss Harriett Holley. The book reviewed was "Merry Christmas, Mr. Baxter," the best seller by Edward Streeter. This was a treat. The book is hilariously funny, and Miss Holley's review was pure entertainment.

The rooms of the Elementary School were open to the Garden Club, and the Christmas decorations and art work were beautiful and much admired.

After this tour of the school, delicious refreshments were served.

Vera

Vera, Dec. 19.- "The angels said unto them Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people, for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." Luke 28-15.

We are near Christmas and I hope that we may all celebrate it as we should and that there will not be any bad accidents on the highway and that all of our readers may have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Visitors in the home of Mr. and Mrs. T. C. Harvel for the week-end were Mrs. Eva Hayden, Mr. and Mrs. T. J. Harvey, of Richmond; Mr. Lewis Turnes, Mr. Richard Carson, and Miss Marguerite Gilliam, T. C. Harvey, Jr., and T. C. III.

The W. M. S. of the New Hope Baptist Church met on Friday night, with a good attendance.

We are glad that Mrs. Homer Reynolds has gotten home from the hospital, and getting along nicely.

We are sorry to hear of the illness of Mrs. Grace Bryant, and wish for her a speedy recovery.

Mrs. Eva Hayden and Mr. and Mrs. T. J. Harvey visited Mrs. Maude Abbitt in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Willie Childers on Sunday.

Everybody is busy getting ready for Christmas.

Attend church this Sunday!

Play safe: dirve carefully.

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